

As tests confirm the second case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the United States, Rep Waxman issues the following comment:

The second case of mad cow disease identified in the United States nearly escaped detection. The Inspector General identified an unusual pattern in test results and insisted upon additional evaluation. But the Agriculture Department should have gotten it right in the first place.

The Administration's response to mad cow disease appears to be more public relations than public health. The Agriculture Department now says it's taking aggressive steps, but just a few weeks ago the Department was talking about easing the ban on downer cattle in the food supply and sharply reducing mad cow surveillance. Meanwhile, the Food and Drug Administration has quietly backed away from previously announced measures to strengthen the safety of the animal food supply.

Today's announcement exposes the error in the Administration's complacency. Congress must investigate what went wrong, and the Administration must finally enforce strong measures to protect against mad cow disease.